WebBuyer

SITE REVIEWS

SITE REVIEWS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

COMPILED BY KEVIN SAVETZ AND ABIGAIL CRANE

PC SHOPPING SITES

The sites in this listing sell products from multiple manufacturers. See the sites under "PC Direct Vendors," or check the *Computer Shopper* Source Directory ***(cgi.zdnet.com/slink?8145)*** for more information on PC manufacturers offering only their own brands (such as Dell and Gateway).

aberdeeninc.com

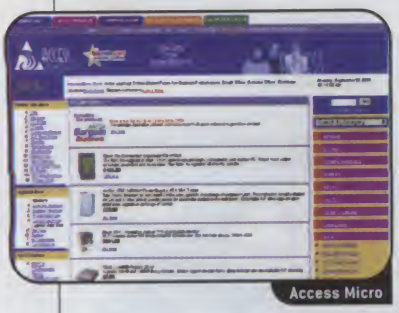
👍 volume pricing • smooth navigation • easy ordering
👎 limited software selection

Serving the savvy consumer who craves technical information, **Aberdeen** offers extensive specs on a wide variety of computers and accessories.

accessmicro.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering

Shoppers will enjoy the selection at **Access Micro,** which offers 45,000 items ranging from memory to T1 routers. The help desk and hardware guide provide aid to first-time visitors.


Access Micro

www.applied-computer.com

👍 smooth navigation
👎 handling fee on orders under $200

Selling PCs and supplies since 1984, **Applied Computer** promises to match or beat any advertised price. The company stocks 800,000 products—check the site's list of the 1,000 most popular ones.

blackbox.com

👍 smooth navigation

Specializing in cabling and network-connectivity products, **Black Box's** extensive 900-page catalog of storage, LAN, switch, surge-protection, and other accessories can be viewed online or off.

buy.com

👍 price-matching policy • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

You'll find everything from computers and software to electronics, books, movies, music, and video games at this monstrous, multifaceted site. **Buy.com** sells a whopping 850,000 items. Despite the site's mind-blowing selection, shopping is fast and efficient.

buyitnow.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering
👎 no telephone orders

At **BuyItNow.com,** you'll find more than 120,000 hardware and software products. Additional categories include car audio, home electronics, and bargain blowouts.

cablestogo.com

👍 hard-to-find tools and test equipment
👎 $30 minimum-order requirement

Cables To Go sells every conceivable cable, cord, or wire your PC might need, from standard SCSI to esoteric system-specific cables. You'll also find networking products and all sorts of adapters.

cdw.com

👍 list of rebates and coupons • business leasing options available • smooth navigation • easy ordering

CDW offers an impressive array of hardware and software. The comparison tool lets shoppers create side-by-side comparisons in many product categories.

compgeeks.com

This funky site sells lots of discontinued and refurbished computer gear—perfect for do-it-yourselfers piecing together a PC. At **compgeeks.com**, you'll find a varied selection and a lighthearted attitude. You'll also find low prices and complete specs on every product.

compuplus.com

👍 good return policy

Comp-U-Plus highlights its customer service, offering a 30-day money-back guarantee and free technical support. Its catalog isn't the biggest, but plenty of name brands are represented, and prices are reasonable.

compusa.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering

CompUSA is a well-organized site offering a fair amount of PC hardware, peripherals, and accessories, with electronics, software, and gadgets rounding out the selection. Don't overlook the site's clearance section.

computability.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering

Beginning its mail-order business in 1982, **ComputAbility** has aged considerably better than the Commodore 64 you bought that year. The site offers desktop, notebook, and handheld computers, plus a wide variety of peripherals and software.

computercomputer.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering

This site is blunt about its target market: "Who should not shop here? Computer novices and first-time computer buyers or builders." But if you want to piece together your own PC and don't need technical assistance, **computercomputer.com's** bare-bones systems and components will make a good starting point.

www.computergate.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

In business since 1991, **ComputerGate** offers a 30-day satisfaction return policy on its products, which include built-to-order PCs and peripherals.

computers4sure.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The 17 well-stocked departments at **Computers4Sure.com** include

networking equipment, peripherals, PDAs, scanners, and more—the selection spans 60,000 products. Fast and intuitive, the site delivers handy features for choosy shoppers. Bargain hunters can quickly sniff out deals on the Special Offers and Clearance pages.

computershopper.com

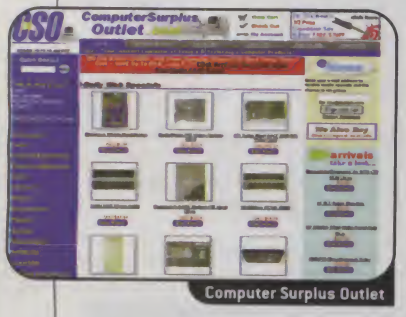
smooth navigation

Computer Shopper's own computer-buying site, **computershopper.com,** provides access to product reviews, interactive guides to choosing a desktop or a notebook, and How to Buy sections for the most popular product categories.

computersurplusoutlet.com

consignment service • smooth navigation • easy ordering

Frugal shoppers and do-it-yourselfers will feel at home at **Computer Surplus Outlet,** a computer hardware liquidator. The company sells closeouts, overstocks, refurbished equipment, and liquidation items at bargain-basement prices. You can find complete, assembly-required Pentium systems for less than $100.



cqk.com

Designed for folks who know what they want, **Computer Quick** offers plain-box, best-buy, and closeout merchandise in addition to a selection of more than 90,000 items in regular stock.

cyberrebate.com

"100% Off" tab shows 300 products whose rebates equal their cost • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

rebates take 10 to 14 weeks to process

CyberRebate.com only sells products that come with money-back rebates. You'll find a small selection of computer accessories and software. In addition, the site offers electronics, office supplies, toys, and kitchen items.

SITE REVIEWS

cyberwarehouse.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

may take up to three days to ship

If you're the kind of shopper who can't pass up a bargain-basement sale or an outlet mall, this site may be for you. **CyberWarehouse** offers PCs, monitors, printers, and other peripherals.

www.dalco.com

international and APO/FPO orders • smooth navigation

Dalco stocks everything from motherboards to monitors. Bargain hunters will want to start with this site's specials, which are shown on the home page and change regularly.

direct411.com

easy ordering

Direct411 offers an impressive selection of 50,000 in-stock hardware and software products. The catalog includes servers, memory upgrades, storage devices, digital cameras, and software.

dirtcheapdrives.com

detailed archive of technical-support information • quantity discounts available • smooth navigation • easy ordering

If you can store data on it, this site sells it. **Dirt Cheap Drives** offers deals on hard drives, CD-ROM and DVD hardware, drive arrays, and hard-to-find laptop storage. This 10-year-old company also stocks mounting kits, media, and other accessories.

ecost.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The **eCost.com** catalog spans the full realm of PC hardware and software, including ready-to-use systems, peripherals, accessories, software, and games. Featured specials in each category point shoppers to the best deals, and fastidiously organized subcategories help them find the exact products they need.

egghead.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Egghead.com shoppers can browse the hardware, software, office-product, and electronics superstores. You can also buy home electronics and leisure products.

electrified.com

30-day guarantee on all items • se habla español • good return policy

Looking for deep discounts on older laptops, notebooks, monitors, and printers? **Electrified** specializes in products that are discontinued, second-inventory, refurbished, off-lease, or otherwise not state-of-the-art. Systems range from new Pentium II laptops to under-$200 used 486s.

elinux.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The **eLinux.com** site offers hardware and software for users of the Linux operating system. Desktop and notebook systems for sale here have been tested with Linux and don't come bundled with that "other" OS.

firstsource.com

real-time online customer service • smooth navigation • easy ordering

Focused on the technology needs of businesses, **Firstsource** offers a broad range of choices in computer hardware, rack-mount systems, network tools, phone systems, wiring, and business software.

gogocity.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

You'll get beyond **GoGoCity.com's** funny name when you see its excellent selection of computer hardware. You'll find desktop and notebook computers, peripherals, software, and PC accessories of all types. Detailed product information, often with pictures, rounds out the catalog.

www.handgear.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

HandGear offers a small selection of Palm hardware, plus other mobile-computing accessories and software.

insight.com

separate sites for the U.S., Canada, Germany, and the U.K. • smooth navigation • easy ordering

With more than 100,000 items, **Insight** offers an impressive and easy-to-navigate catalog of hardware and software products. More than 100 free newsletters feature new-product news, closeout specials, and tech news.

SITE REVIEWS

www.jandr.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Hardware, software, home-office products, and appliances abound at **J&R Computer World,** making this a one-stop shop for many. You'll also find a huge selection of digital and traditional film cameras.

laptoptravel.com

smooth navigation

Laptop Travel sells portable-computing and international travel gear, including electrical adapters, modem converters and couplers, and security accessories. You'll find both traditional and "camouflaged" laptop carrying cases, laptop RAM, and storage add-ons.

Laptop Travel

thelinuxstore.com

smooth navigation

If your PC is penguin-powered, **The Linux Store** might be your place to shop. The site offers a small selection of hardware and software that's compatible with the popular alternative operating system. The community area offers Linux news, free downloads, and Web links.

mcglen.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

McGlen Micro's specialized searches can help you find memory and other accessories compatible with your computer, printer, and copier. Shoppers can design a custom system to be built and shipped in two days.

megahaus.com

lifetime technical support on all products • CD-mastering and other utility software • smooth navigation

MegaHaus calls itself "the drive authority." It offers a wide variety of storage solutions, including hard drives, DVD drives, RAID, and removable storage. A technical-information area features FAQs and specifications on hardware ranging from DVD players to drive brackets.

mei-microcenter.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

MEI-Micro Center offers new and refurbished desktops from Compaq, eMachines, Hewlett-Packard, and PowerSpec. There's also a small selection of peripherals. Rummage around the bargain bin for deals on closeouts, refurbished units, and overstocks.

memman.com

all memory carries a lifetime warranty • smooth navigation • good return policy

When it's time to upgrade the memory in your desktop or laptop, don't forget **Memory Man.** Besides memory chips, the site sells processors, motherboards, hard drives, heat sinks, and batteries for many types of notebooks.

memory4less.com

company tests all products shipped • smooth navigation

Memory4Less offers low prices on a wide variety of RAM, including older, hard-to-find types. If you don't know the memory requirements of your computer or digital camera, it will tell you. The site also sells CPUs, motherboards, and laptop hard drives.

microx-press.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

MicroX-Press offers detailed information about most products, as well as a handy "E-mail me when this product is priced at..." feature and a configuration tool. Customers are invited to rate and review products they've tried.

www.mobile-mania.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Digital cameras, e-mail devices, PDAs, cases, and adapters of all sorts are available for folks on the go at **Mobile Mania.**

mobileplanet.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Offering gadgets for mobile professionals, **MobilePlanet** is home to a gaggle of high-tech tools and toys. The selection includes handheld and notebook computers, PDAs, wireless communication products, and travel-size printers and scanners—plus countless accessories for each.

mobshop.com

smooth navigation

Mobshop offers group-buying discounts on computer hardware, software, PDAs, and home electronics. As more customers buy a product within a specified time period, the price drops for all buyers.

motherboards.com

With a wide selection of motherboards from nine manufacturers, do-it-yourselfers can pick the perfect innards for their new PCs at **Motherboards.com.** This Web store offers CPUs, memory, graphics cards, drives, and other internal essentials.

www.mwave.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Multiwave Direct's friendly site sells a multitude of hardware and software products. In addition to PC systems and peripherals, this Web store stocks notebook accessories, videoconferencing equipment, and network tools.

neutronet.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Neutron carries thousands of computer systems and peripherals from nearly 400 different manufacturers and distributors. The site's handy toolbox offers easy access to best buys, help for first-time buyers, and a massive manufacturer directory.

www.notebooksuperstore.com

devoted exclusively to portable computers • easy ordering

Notebook Superstore sells more than 40 different laptop models from nine manufacturers. You'll see technical details about each model, and a comparison tool helps you zero in on the best portable for your needs.

123cdc.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Computer Discount Center offers a wide variety of PC add-ons, including storage, digital cameras, and displays. Shoppers will find competitive prices and detailed product information.

onvia.com

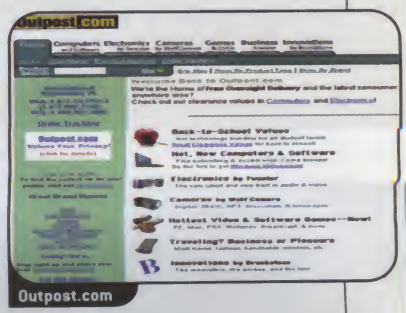
smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Onvia.com, a business-to-business marketplace, offers many features that distinguish it as a small-business resource and computer-products store. The site's selection of computer hardware, software, and office products spans 37,000 items. The site also includes a Request for Quote marketplace, buying guides, and auctions.

outpost.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The breadth of products at **Outpost.com** will impress. The site sells a wide selection of computer hardware and software, personal electronics, and office products. The company works hard to earn customer satisfaction with policies like a 30-day money-back guarantee and free overnight delivery.



Outpost.com

www.palmgear.com

mailing lists offer news, specials, and user tips • smooth navigation

Palm-device users will appreciate the extensive selection of free and commercial downloadable programs at **PalmGear HQ.** The site features lists of the newest Palm programs, as well as

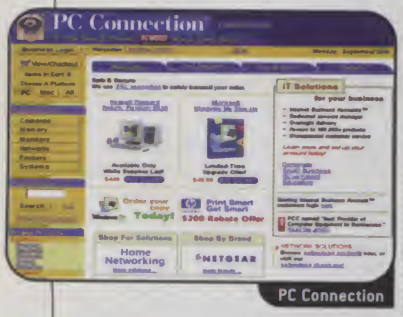
SITE REVIEWS

essential software picks. Shoppers can buy handheld hardware and accessories, including carrying cases and styli.

pcconnection.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

In business for more than 15 years, **PC Connection** offers good deals on a colossal variety of products. Smart Selectors ease the searching process for shoppers looking for systems, cameras, printers, monitors, or memory to fit specific guidelines.



pcmall.com

free lifetime technical support • smooth navigation • easy ordering

Many folks are familiar with **PC Mall's** thick, colorful catalog, and the online version is just as dense. PC Mall has a vast selection of computers, hardware, and software.

pcprogress.com

smooth navigation

If you're in the market for PC components and peripherals, check out **PC Progress.** The site specializes in cost-effective memory, with a lifetime warranty. You'll find a large selection of memory, including notebook, iMac, and printer RAM.

pcstop.com

This purveyor of hardware and software offers 50,000 computer-related products from 1,300 manufacturers. **PC Stop** offers a wealth of details about each product, including technical-support and warranty information.

pczone.com

printable rebate coupons • smooth navigation • easy ordering

PC Zone boasts an impressive product selection of all things PC-related, including desktops, notebooks, printers, monitors, storage devices, CPU upgrades, and network equipment—not to mention PDAs, digital cameras, and MP3 players. You'll also find links to a clearance area and other stores: **Mac Zone** and **Electronics Zone.**

provantage.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Provantage offers PC products from more than 1,000 manufacturers. The selection includes software, hardware, books, and training materials. The site's Personal Tracking List feature lets customers build a list of product bookmarks, then monitor the products' prices and availability.

www.qualityclick.com

easy ordering • good return policy

The **Quality Click** Web store covers all the basics for PC users, including hardware, networking supplies, accessories, and software. Technical support is available through a toll-free phone number, fax, or e-mail.

shopper.cnet.com

smooth navigation

The **CNET Shopper** search engine takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. The site tracks the prices of more than 200,000 products in 100 stores.

shoppingplanet.com

smooth navigation

Do-it-yourselfers will appreciate **Shopping Planet's** inventory of barebones systems, add-on cards, and kits. An arm of the site that specializes in software and hardware for the Linux operating system is available at ***shoppingplanet.com/cm/linux.asp.***

www.sparco.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Sparco's catalog of more than 130,000 products makes it simple to shop for computer equipment. Looking for that something extra? Check out the list of products that come bundled with "free stuff."

www.spidergear.com

Spider Gear offers new and refurbished computers, cameras, home audio and video products, car-audio items, and appliances. A $10 optional membership entitles you to reduced prices, an annual rebate, and advance notice of new products.

www.ssdonline.com

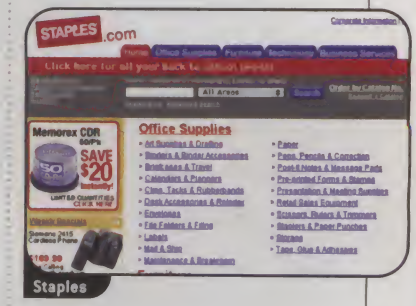
smooth navigation

At **State Street Direct's** Web store, shoppers will discover a huge selection of consumer electronics in addition to computers and imaging products. Digital photographers will find many items of interest.

staples.com

liberal price-matching policy • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Even if a **Staples** store is just down the block, you might prefer this elegant Web site when shopping for computer accessories, software, and office supplies. If you order similar items often, you can set up personalized lists to avoid filling out a new form every time.



2for1inkjet.com

free shipping on orders of six or more items, or at least $200 • smooth navigation • good return policy

If your printer is putting you in the poorhouse, pay a visit to **2 For 1 Inkjet,** where you'll find two-for-one supplies for every brand of inkjet and laser printer, copier, and fax machine.

3re.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Specializing in used computers and rebuilt electronic equipment, **3Re.com** takes open-box returns from original equipment manufacturers, and repairs and repackages the machines. Offerings include desktops, notebooks, printers, monitors, network equipment, and software.

tccomputers.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

In business since 1988, **TC Computers** sells fully configured systems, motherboards, and name-brand peripherals. The company's specialty is motherboards—it tests each one prior to shipping and bundles a step-by-step installation video.

tcwo.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Thompson's Computer Warehouse Outlet Center offers "wholesale computer parts to the public." The selection is small—you may find only a dozen monitors or four CD-ROM drives—but the prices are fantastic. Browse the selection or print out a complete price sheet for easy reference.

SITE REVIEWS

techstore.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

TechStore offers hardware in dozens of categories, ranging from CPU upgrades to storage devices. The site also offers a wide range of software—everything from Microsoft applications to children's titles.

thortek.com

smooth navigation

An array of computer accessories awaits **ThorTek** shoppers, including hard drives, notebook upgrades, peripherals, and software.

tigerdirect.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

TigerDirect's site offers custom-built computers, tested and shipped within 48 hours. Shoppers in the mood for an adventure can order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit.

truedataonline.com

smooth navigation

True Data Technology's selection spans desktops, laptops, and palmtops, with an exceptional catalog of motherboards, hard drives, and other upgrade accessories. The site also features communication essentials for businesses, including DSL equipment and telephony products.

www.usbstuff.com

Looking for gadgets to plug into your new Universal Serial Bus-equipped computer? **USB Stuff** has it all, including digital cameras, CD-RW drives, printers, modems, hubs, input devices, cables, and adapters. A sister site at ***www.firewirestuff.com*** stocks IEEE 1394/FireWire-compatible hardware.

usedcomputer.com

index of nonprofit organizations accepting computer donations

Used Computer Mall is a marketplace for used computer equipment. Shoppers can list hardware to sell or look for items to buy using the free classified ads. The site can also help you appraise equipment.

warehouse.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The five "warehouses" under **MicroWarehouse's** roof sell PC hardware and software, Mac products, networking components, and supplies. The site provides corporate, educational, and government accounts. Business leases are available.

PC DIRECT VENDORS

axissys.com

The **Axis Systems** Web store offers a best-price guarantee on its preconfigured notebooks, servers, desktops, and workstations.

buyabs.com

systems available with Linux preinstalled • smooth navigation • good return policy

Offering exceptional customer support on quality desktop and notebook systems is the goal at **ABS.** Shoppers can custom-configure a wide variety of PCs.

buy-atlas.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

The **Atlas Micro** site sells a variety of preconfigured desktop PCs. Buyers can select from computers built around Pentium III, Celeron, and AMD processors.

cyberpowerinc.com

downloadable drivers • smooth navigation • good return policy

From the Transparent Dream to the Lightning Professional, the computers at **CyberPower** have names as good as their warranties—three years, with a 30-day money-back guarantee.

dell.com

online technical support customized for your particular system • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Carrying the online banner for one of the largest names in direct PC sales, **Dell** specializes in built-to-order desktop and notebook PCs. The site offers detailed specs, an online tour of each product, and customization options.

www.directplus.compaq.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Compaq DirectPlus carries desktops, portables, workstations, and servers. The Compaq Factory Outlet at ***www.compaqworks.com*** offers discounts on refurbished and new overstocked merchandise.

www.fosa.com

good return policy

Fosa's built-to-order notebook computers include a 15-day money-back guarantee with no restocking fee and lifetime technical support.

fpcdirect.fujitsu-pc.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Purchase **Fujitsu** notebook computers from the source. This Web site offers personal, business, and multimedia notebook computers, with several warranty options on each. Check the Refurbished Outlet for deals.

gateway.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

One of the biggest names in online computer sales, **Gateway** offers an octopus-like site that sells custom-built desktops and portables. The company delivers them on time 98 percent of the time, according to e-commerce watchdog BizRate.com.

hpshopping.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

At this site, **Hewlett-Packard** sells its lines of desktop and notebook computers, handhelds, PDAs, digital cameras, and printers. Business leases are also available.

ibm.com/shop

Linux available on laptop models • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

ShopIBM sells business and home computers, notebooks, servers, and thin clients. The site also offers the networking equipment to hook them all together, as well as peripherals and software. The build-to-order option allows buyers to customize a new desktop PC.

idot.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

From low-cost budget models to powerful monster machines, **iDot** offers customized desktop and notebook computers. The iForum area includes tech articles and Q&A lists of interest to *PC shoppers.*

SITE REVIEWS

kaypro.com

smooth navigation

Kaypro's first computer, released in the early '80s, used a Z-80 processor and ran the long-forgotten CP/M operating system. Today, the company's Web site sells decidedly more modern desktop computers, allowing shoppers to custom-configure Pentium III systems.

microexpress.net

smooth navigation • good return policy

Micro Express offers custom-configured desktop and notebook computers featuring AMD and Intel processors. Each system includes a 30-day guarantee and a two- or four-year warranty.

micronpc.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

One of the largest direct PC vendors, **micronpc.com** has a Web sales site broken into clear areas to suit many types of customers, including home-office users, large businesses, government buyers, and buyers outside the United States.

nutrend.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Custom-configure a home or business PC at **NuTrend.** The company offers a wide selection of desktop machines running your choice of Intel or AMD processors. Each system comes with a three-year warranty.

sagernotebook.com

leasing options available • smooth navigation • good return policy

Specializing in portable computers, **Sager** offers a variety of notebook-computing options, from budget machines to speedy multimedia units. The one-year warranty includes a 72-hour repair-turnaround guarantee.

shopacer.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Notebooks, desktops, and accessories are for sale at **Acer's** site, in addition to ready-to-use PC bundles for home, business, and education.

shopprostar.com

downloadable drivers • smooth navigation • good return policy

Each computer in **ProStar's** line of notebook PCs is backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee, a speedy-repair promise, and free tech support.

store.apple.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Apple's easy-to-use online store allows buyers to custom-configure the company's Power Mac G4, PowerBook, iMac, and iBook computers. A wide array of Mac-compatible software and accessories is also available.

tiny.com

smooth navigation

Leading British PC maker **Tiny Computers** has joined the U.S. market. The company's line of prebuilt PCs ranges from beginner to professional models.

unitedmicro.com

smooth navigation

United Micro sells custom-configured desktop and server computers with Intel and AMD processors. The site also offers a large selection of motherboards for PC builders.

vaiodirect.sel.sony.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

VAIO Direct sells Sony's line of desktops, notebooks, digital cameras, displays, and storage devices. The Xtras Direct arm offers add-ons for PCs, digital cameras, and other equipment.

www.winbook.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Focusing exclusively on notebook computers, **WinBook** offers machines with a 30-day money-back guarantee, a one-year warranty, and free technical support.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

www.att.net

AT&T WorldNet offers 750 local access numbers. The standard pricing plan is $19.95 per month for 150 hours of access. For $2 more, power users can get unlimited access. Families and Websmiths will appreciate the whopping 60MB of Web-page space and six e-mail addresses.

compuserve.com

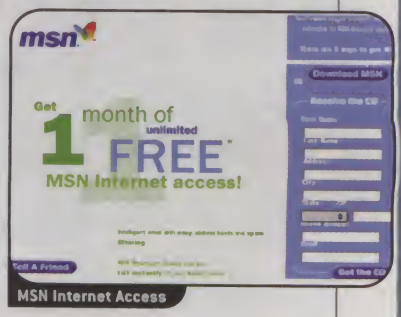
Owned by America Online, **CompuServe** is aimed at professionals and is more powerful than AOL. Access is $9.95 per month for 20 hours, or $19.95 for unlimited access. Customers get seven e-mail addresses and 5MB of Web-page space.

csg.sprint.com/internet

Unlimited access to **Sprint EarthLink** costs $19.95 a month ($2 less if you are a Sprint long-distance customer). The service provides 6MB of Web-page space and an impressive 2,300 local-access phone numbers nationwide.

free.msn.com

Displaying a recently revamped interface, **MSN Internet Access** costs $21.95 per month for unlimited access, and the first month is free. The service is not available for Mac users. MSN provides 30MB for Web pages.



www.newaol.com

Known for its ease of use, **America Online** is the nation's most popular ISP. It offers many pricing plans, including one for $21.95 per month that gives unlimited access. Extras include members-only forums, 14MB of Web-page space, and seven e-mailboxes.

prodigy.com

A $19.95 monthly fee buys unlimited access to **Prodigy Internet.** Low-usage and deluxe-access plans are also available. Users get 6MB of Web-page space. Accounts come with only one e-mail address, but you can add 10 more for $2 extra.

SECTION CONTINUES ON PAGE 197

PC RESOURCES

cablemodeminfo.com

helps you find a cable-ready ISP

Internet addicts considering upgrading to a cable modem or DSL connection—as well as users who have already made the jump—will find a cornucopia of information at **CableModemInfo.com.** You'll find reviews of cable-modem and DSL hardware, plus tips on sharing a modem between PCs.

www.consumersearch.com

smooth navigation

ConsumerSearch collects abstracts of all sorts of products, including computers, appliances, sports equipment, and automobiles. Each abstract includes a citation (for magazine articles) or a link (for online reviews).

dailyedeals.com

smooth navigation

Before you place an order at your favorite e-commerce site, open a window to **DailyeDeals.** Its coupon pages offer coupon codes that will instantly shave $5 to $40 off the bottom line at major online retailers. The First Time area links to sites that offer substantial discounts to first-time customers.

dcresource.com

message board • links to digital-camera stores

The **Digital Camera Resource Page** is an unbiased, comprehensive source of information for digital-camera buyers and owners. Shoppers will enjoy the FAQ page, buyer's guide, and reviews.

dealtime.com

DealTime Mobile service lets you compare prices from a cell phone or Palm device • smooth navigation

DealTime is an independent comparison-shopping service that helps you decide where to buy online. The site aggregates prices from hundreds of merchants, auctions, and classified sites.

www.expertcity.com

smooth navigation
currently no support for Mac or Unix operating systems

Expertcity.com promises live, 24-hour computer assistance from real human beings. When you pose a question, experts across the Internet bid for your business. Read their profiles, compare prices, then choose the expert you like.

SITE REVIEWS

56k.com

downloads of the latest modem firmware • smooth navigation

Don't buy a new modem until you've visited **56K Modem Central.** Start with the primer on 56Kbps modems, learn the difference between technologies, then use the price shopper to find a model at the best price.

www.ftc.gov

smooth navigation

The **Federal Trade Commission's** Web site is packed with useful information for consumers. The content covers the spectrum of consumer fraud and how to avoid it—online and offline. Articles address online auctions and protecting yourself when shopping on the Net.

gomez.com

smooth navigation

Gomez.com offers ratings and customer reviews of e-commerce sites in two dozen categories, ranging from Web-based computer stores to drugstores, apparel shopping to online brokers. Read other customers' reviews and check their ratings on ease of use, customer confidence, and cost.

help-site.com

links to 1,000 documents • smooth navigation

Help-Site is a great place to find FAQ lists, tutorials, manuals, and official as well as unofficial support. You'll find documentation on DOS, Windows, OS/2, and even Unix and VAX/VMS systems.

helptalk.com

smooth navigation

Helptalk offers free assistance for most Windows software and hardware. The site offers 30 message boards where you can ask questions about applications, operating systems, and programming.

modemhelp.com

smooth navigation

ModemHelp provides technical support for modem users and a hearty list of links to other modem-related sites. You'll find information on upgrading modems, diagnostic tools, tutorials, and discussion forums.

motherboards.org

smooth navigation

Motherboard HomeWorld offers motherboard news, reviews, specifications, and tips. Its comprehensive database of 1,100 boards includes driver information, technical information, and overclocking details.

nextag.com

product reviews available • smooth navigation

NexTag is a sophisticated buying service that can help frugal shoppers find the lowest possible prices on computer equipment, electronics, books, music, and videos. Entering your ZIP code allows NexTag to calculate shipping and tax for accurate pricing.

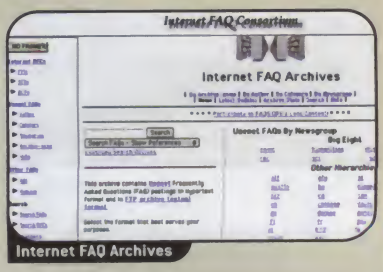
pdastreet.com

smooth navigation

PDA Street, a resource for users of

< TIPS > for Choosing and Using a Tech-Help Site

- If you need answers to computer-related questions but don't know where to turn, you can find an expert online. Web-based technical-help services will hook you up with a pro who can answer your questions for just a few dollars. These services can be helpful when you need assistance setting up new equipment you received for the holidays, or even for personalized tech-related holiday shopping advice.
- Ask your question at sites such as **Arzoo.com** or **Expertcity.com,** and folks in the know will bid for your business. Don't jump for the lowest bid: Both sites allow you to check an expert's history to see if previous questioners were pleased with the help they received. You can interact with the experts using a real-time chat system at these sites.



- On some sites, questions aren't limited to computer subjects. **ExpertCentral.com** also addresses medical, legal, and travel issues—there's even a relationships category. Arzoo.com's categories are strictly technology-oriented—subjects include data mining, e-commerce suites, and network management.
- Fees vary depending on the subject matter, the difficulty of the question, even the time of day. Experts can make themselves available day or night, so there might be less competition—and higher prices—at 3 a.m. than in the middle of the workday.
- If you don't need help right away, you may be able to get it for free. **Askme.com** and **AllExperts.com** offer access to experts who do not charge. Using these message-board systems may not provide answers as quickly as a one-on-one chat, though.
- Don't forget about product-support Web sites and frequently asked questions lists ***(www.faqs.org)***, which offer free, self-serve technical help. Similarly, posting your question to the appropriate newsgroup can also yield expert assistance.

Palm, Windows CE, Psion, and Visor personal digital assistants, offers message boards, software downloads, news, and product reviews.

www.thepubliceye.com

customer-satisfaction database • smooth navigation

Find Internet businesses that deliver the best service—and avoid the ones that don't—with **ePublicEye.com,** a customer-service rating site. The site uses secret shoppers who patronize Internet businesses, conducting audits and rating the service of each business.

rammatters.com

Flash 4 plug-in required for maximum effects

RAM Matters humorously explains how adding memory to your computer will make you more productive, and, so the site claims, better-looking. You'll get help in determining the type of memory your computer requires, plus installation tips.

www.scambusters.com

information on viruses—real and fake

Internet ScamBusters is a site and a newsletter aiming to help Net users avoid getting cheated. Each newsletter focuses on a single type of scam, ranging from the merely annoying to the downright dangerous. Scams that target online shoppers are also covered.

usb.org

smooth navigation

Check this site for technical information about the *Universal Serial Bus,* as well as answers to frequently asked questions and information about devices that use it. There's information for end users as well as developers.

SITE REVIEWS

windrivers.com

smooth navigation

WinDrivers.com is a comprehensive archive of drivers and DLL files for hard drives, sound cards, scanners, and other hardware. The site also provides links to antivirus updates and BIOS upgrades.

www.worldowindows.com

hundreds of downloadable drivers • smooth navigation

World O'Windows is a collection of useful news, resources, and tips about current and future versions of Microsoft Windows. Information and user tips abound. The site can be invaluable if you're considering upgrading or if your recent upgrade is causing problems.

SOFTWARE SITES

accountingshop.com

get credit for your old QuickBooks or Peachtree software when you upgrade • smooth navigation

The **Accounting Shop** Web store focuses on accounting software. Shoppers can choose from an extensive catalog of high-end, midrange, and small-business packages. Easy-to-understand charts let you compare products by type, function, or price.

beyond.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Beyond.com presents a cornucopia of choices for PC, Mac, and PDA users. In addition to traditional boxed titles, the site sells downloadable software from major publishers. The site also offers a respectable selection of computer hardware, including digital cameras, PDAs, and storage devices.

buycheapsoftware.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The name says it all: Here you can **Buy Cheap Software.** This site offers a relatively small selection—about 300 titles—but it does sell popular programs from well-known publishers, including Adobe, Corel, Lotus, and Microsoft.

buyonet.com

site available in six languages • software available in 20 languages • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Buyonet specializes in downloadable commercial software. Hundreds of business applications, utilities, and games are available for download. For a nominal fee, shoppers can order a CD backup of purchased software.

chumbo.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

If you're looking for a one-stop shop for software, visit **Chumbo.com.** In addition to tons of Windows and Mac programs, the site features a Linux Store that sells applications for the popular alternative OS. You'll also find an array of DVD movies here.

cws.internet.com

free e-mail summary of software updates • smooth navigation

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate one-stop download site for the latest and greatest in Internet software. Find and download Web development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews.

dealdealdeal.com

smooth navigation

Dealdealdeal.com offers office suites, utility software, graphics programs, operating systems, games, and edutainment software. Although the selection isn't massive, shoppers will find a nice mix of new software and older titles—handy, whether you're looking for Microsoft Office 2000 or Office 97.

download.com

smooth navigation

When you're looking for shareware or free software, **Download.com** is a fine starting point. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews will help you find the perfect programs. The site links to tens of thousands of files of PC, Mac, Linux, Windows CE, and Palm software.

ebworld.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The online arm of the ubiquitous Electronics Boutique stores, **EBWorld.com** is a video-game player's paradise, offering 3,000 products. Its home page highlights new releases, coming-soon titles, and game news.

freewarefiles.com

smooth navigation

Windows users who want great software without having to spend any money can start at **Freeware Files.** This Web site offers links to gratis business applications, screen savers, games, and many other types of software. It features quick links to the most popular giveaways.

jumbo.com

smooth navigation

Jumbo is the perfect name for this monstrous file archive. In addition to programs for sale, you'll find thousands of commercial-application demos, along with loads of shareware and free software.

mightyscholar.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

It can be hard to find educational software that's right for your children's ages and learning needs. **Mighty Scholar** sells handpicked educational software, categorized by age range and subject.

999central.com

buy seven programs, get one free • smooth navigation • good return policy

The **999central.com** site offers 500 programs, each for $9.99. Shoppers can find a wide variety of software here, although educational, entertainment, and lifestyle programs are the most common.

www.pdfstore.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The **PDF Store** specializes in software for creating and working with Portable Document Format files. The site sells

shareware and commercial software for immediate download. The selection includes PDF conversion, management, printing, and development software—a convenient, focused selection.

soft4u.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Soft4U specializes in software for businesses, resellers, schools, and government offices. The company offers same-day shipping on most software. Special prices are available for staff and students at academic institutions.

www.softwarebuyline.com

free shipping on orders over $50 • smooth navigation • good return policy

Software BuyLine has a massive selection of software titles for Windows, Mac OS, Windows CE, and Palm. Prices here are usually among the best. You'll also get easy access to product rebate information.

www.tucows.com

mirror sites speed downloads • smooth navigation

Bovine bliss: **Tucows** is an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. The category list and reviews make it easy to find the software you're seeking. In the Online Store, you can pay for, register, and download commercial software.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

www.americancentury.com

stock, bond, and option trading • retirement services • smooth navigation

Whether you're a conservative, moderate, or aggressive investor, **American Century** has a fund targeted to your needs.

ameritrade.com

sophisticated tools for options traders • smooth navigation

Offering a variety of IRAs, mutual funds, and other investment services, **Ameritrade** features low commissions for Internet, phone, and broker-assisted investing. Clients can receive timely information about stocks in their portfolios by e-mail, pager, or mobile phone.

SITE REVIEWS

bondsonline.com

daily bond-market commentary • daily pricing of U.S. Treasury securities

Bonds Online offers market information about tax-free municipal bonds, Treasury bonds, funds, and brokers. You can also buy software that will calculate the prices and yields of your bonds.

clearstation.com

discussions about stocks and trading strategies • track an unlimited number of portfolios • smooth navigation

ClearStation is a financial-advisory Web site that helps investors make decisions by identifying and interpreting stock trends.

datek.com

free real-time quotes • after-hours trading • smooth navigation

Investors can build their own portfolios at **Datek,** using online resources to make educated decisions. The commission for most online trades is $9.99.

www.edgar-online.com

search the SEC database • historical data dating back to 1994 • smooth navigation

For up-to-date financial reports on companies, **Edgar Online** is a great place to start. Premium subscribers enjoy real-time SEC filings, insider transaction filings, and custom company watch lists.

etrade.com

community area offers discussion groups and online events • smooth navigation

ETrade investors can learn about companies, then build and manage their own stock portfolios. Amenities include free streaming NASDAQ Level II quotes, IPO allocations, and real-time updates.

everbank.com

smooth navigation

Everbank offers free online banking services complete with interest-bearing checking accounts and a bill-pay feature. The site also offers Web-based mortgage, insurance, and investing tools.

hoovers.com

4,000 company profiles • upcoming IPOs featured • smooth navigation

Hoover's Online offers countless resources for financial research. Free tools include daily financial headlines and the Stock Screener.

ino.com

option chains • free end-of-the-day updates by e-mail • smooth navigation

Devoted to futures, options, and equities trading, **Ino.com** offers a comprehensive site that includes daily financial headlines, quotes and charts, and lively forums.

kiplinger.com

forums let users ask questions and discuss financial topics • buy financial software and videos • smooth navigation

Kiplinger.com contains a vast array of financial information. Departments include taxes, insurance, investments, and home. Each area includes several articles and columns.

schwab.com

24-hour customer service by phone and e-mail • special services for high-volume traders

Online investors can get help planning for college, retirement, or a rainy day at **Charles Schwab.** This site offers myriad investing options, as well as research and planning services.

stockmaster.com

create custom investment profiles • message boards for investment discussions • smooth navigation

StockMaster will tell you the trading price and details of any stock or investment fund, providing instant graphs of that stock's activity. A subscription service provides access to Baseline Company Profiles of more than 8,000 companies.

wallstreetcity.com

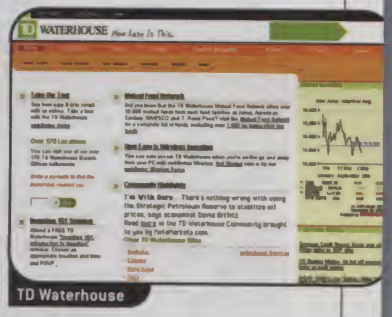
intuitive explanations of stock trends • free 30-day trial

Wall Street City's free services include quotes and graphs, real-time market commentary, and analyst reviews. Paying a monthly subscription fee adds real-time quotes, access to historical pricing data, and portfolio monitoring.

waterhouse.com

offers checking accounts with electronic bill payment

At **TD Waterhouse's** Web site, the money-minded will find brokerage, banking, and mutual-fund services. Waterhouse makes company news, reports, and charts freely available to investors with inquiring minds. Online stock trading costs a flat $12 per transaction.



windowonwallstreet.com

WindowOnWallStreet.com offers professional-level stock trading services, including real-time quotes, dynamically updated charts, real-time option chains, and news. The service costs $79.95 per month and requires you to install a desktop Internet client.

wingspanbank.com

smooth navigation

One of the new breed of Internet banks, **WingspanBank.com** offers a full range of banking, loan, brokerage, and insurance services. Convenient banking options include interest-bearing checking accounts with direct deposit, as well as online bill-payment services.

www.wsrn.com

stock screener • links to publications on economy, equity, and markets

Wall Street Research Net offers thousands of links to help professional and private investors perform research on companies and mutual funds, as well as locate important economic data. Brokerage reports and historical stock-price data are available for a fee.

ONLINE AUCTIONS

auctions.cnet.com

👍 well-defined categories make items easy to locate • smooth navigation

At **CNET Auctions,** a site dedicated to computer-product auctions, you can bid on the hardware and software listed or put any computer items you'd like to sell on the block. Sellers range from individuals to well-known companies.

auctions.goto.com

👍 smooth navigation

GoTo Auctions puts at your disposal a cross-auction search engine that hunts for items in 13 categories.

auctions.yahoo.com

Best Site winner this month. See below.

auctions.zdnet.com

👍 the Auction Agent will notify you when a new auction meets your criteria • smooth navigation

The auction site of **ZDNet,** *Computer Shopper's* parent company, offers primarily computer hardware and software. Categories include consumer electronics, gaming, domains, and services. You'll find user-to-user auctions, as well as new and used items offered by well-known businesses.

ebay.com

👍 smooth navigation

With half a million new auctions every day, **eBay** is the Internet's most popular auction arena. The site is packed with unique services: All purchases are insured up to $200, and Billpoint lets even occasional sellers accept credit-card and electronic-check payments.

ewanted.com

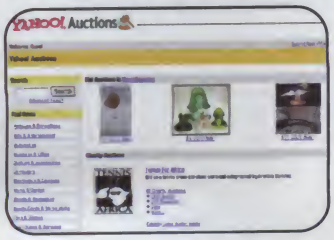
👍 unique process • smooth navigation

"Turning auctions upside down" is the goal of **eWanted.** The site allows potential buyers to list the items they're looking for. Sellers can submit offers, bidding down the price to earn the business. Categories include computer equipment, antiques, household items, and real estate.

auctions.yahoo.com

If you like person-to-person auctions, you'll love **Yahoo Auctions.** This site offers a simple elegance that's lacking in some other auction sites, making it a pleasure to use for both bidders and sellers.

The site appealed to our frugal side from the start. Basic item listings are free, and Yahoo charges neither a listing fee nor takes a cut of the final sale. However, the site does offer flexible promotion options, available for a fee. You can make your item a featured auction, for example, and choose the amount you want to spend each day to promote it.



The service is notable for having the flexibility that's lacking in the other major auction sites. For example, sellers can specify a "buy price," a bid amount at which the auction will automatically close. Sellers can also determine the minimum feedback rating potential bidders must have to weed out deadbeats, as well as specify the closing time for their auctions.

For bidders, the Add to My Calendar function places a reminder about an auction's imminent end in your personal calendar, and sends an e-mail reminder before it closes. Bidders can choose to place a bid for an exact amount, or let the site bid on their behalf up to a certain price.

YAHOO AUCTIONS

Main focus: Auctions in a dozen categories, including computers, antiques, and toys

SITE REVIEWS

haggle.com

👍 smooth navigation

Haggle.com is a user-to-user auction site that has nearly 40 computer-related categories, plus "other stuff" auctions ranging from musical instruments to automobiles. Sellers will appreciate the free basic listings.

itrack.com

👍 auction news area

Simple to use, **iTrack.com** searches online auctions so you don't have to. Free memberships allow you to select five patterns (combinations of an auction site and an item) at a given time; for $25 per year, you can search 10 patterns at a time; and for $50, 20 patterns at a time. You can choose from 14 auction sites.

tradeout.com

👍 smooth navigation

TradeOut.com describes itself as a "business-to-business exchange for excess inventory and idle assets." It helps companies buy and sell surplus goods—from computers to car parts to construction supplies. Most items are sold at auction, but others are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

ubid.com

👍 smooth navigation

UBid's business-to-user auction house offers computers, electronics, housewares, sports items, jewelry, and gifts. If you can't wait several days to learn if you've won, click on the Auctions Closing This Hour link.

SMALL-BUSINESS RESOURCES

atyouroffice.com

👍 free delivery on all orders of more than $25 • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The impressive **AtYourOffice.com** site offers everything for the office, from the essential to the mundane—30,000 products in all. You can limit searches to products that are generic brands, eco-friendly, or manufactured by women- or minority-owned businesses.

consultlink.com

👍 consultant reference checks • smooth navigation

ConsultLink is a directory service that helps businesses find contractors and independent consultants in a wide variety of high-tech fields, such as technology strategy, programming, and technical writing. ConsultLink charges a fee to access each profile. A flat-fee option allows unlimited profile views.

efax.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 202.

e-stamp.com

👍 you don't have to be online to print postage

👎 buying postage requires special hardware

E-Stamp lets you buy postage over the Internet, then print that postage on your printer. You can use E-Stamp to send first-class, Priority Mail, Express Mail, and parcel-post items. The site sells envelopes, labels, postage scales, and other mailing supplies.

www.fedworld.gov/taxsear.htm

👍 smooth navigation • order federal tax information on CD-ROM

At **FedWorld** you'll find downloadable tax forms for tax years 1992 through 1999 and instructions on filling them out, as well as IRS publications, tax tables, and tax regulations.

iprint.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering

With the help of **iPrint.com,** creating personalized items for business is a snap. Place your mark on stationery,

rubber stamps, business cards, and sticky notepads, or create your own promotional items like key chains, T-shirts, and golf balls.

mimeo.com

smooth navigation

Mimeo offers Internet-based document printing, binding, and delivery. Use the special software to print proposals and presentations from your PC, selecting your custom printing and binding options. The documents will be delivered the next day anywhere in the United States or Canada.

efax.com

Computer Shopper Best Site Award

That old fax machine—the one with the curly paper rolls and frequent paper jams—doesn't get much use any more. **EFax.com** makes working with faxes as convenient as sending and receiving e-mail. The company provides two levels of service: a free version, and the feature-laden eFax Plus.

The basic—and free—eFax service allows you to receive faxes and voice mail in your e-mail box. Each user receives a personal phone number to receive incoming faxes and voice mail. Faxes are delivered as e-mail attachments—Windows and Macintosh users can use the free eFax Messenger software to view faxes, while users of other operating systems can receive faxes as TIFF files that can be viewed in any graphics application. The system can be set to detect and eliminate junk faxes.

The eFax Plus subscription service ($4.95 per month) adds the ability to convert incoming faxes to text with optical character recognition, and the ability to send faxes from your PC. Faxes can be sent via e-mail or the Web, or by using the eFax Messenger client.

Mobile professionals will appreciate eFax Wireless, a Plus service that notifies you on your wireless PDA or Internet-enabled cell phone of faxes and voice mail. You can forward an incoming fax to the nearest fax machine to get a remote printout.

EFAX.COM
Main focus: Fax and voice-mail services
Number of services offered: Two
Areas of development: Company is merging with fax provider Jfax to provide additional services and features.

SITE REVIEWS

officedepot.com

free next-day delivery on orders of more than $50 within local trading areas • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Office Depot sells everything for the office: file folders to filing cabinets, briefcases to bookcases. Office Depot provides free downloadable business forms, letter templates, and spreadsheet templates.

www.officemax.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Whether you need a palette of PDAs or just a box of low-tech paper clips, you'll find it at **OfficeMax.** The site sells an enormous variety of paper products, writing instruments, furniture, office machines, and technology products.

paycheckcity.com

Paycheck City provides Web-based calculators to verify the accuracy of payroll checks. Employers can use the site to complete W-4 forms, and employees can verify what they should be paying in federal, state, and Social Security taxes. New tools include an hourly calculator, a bonus calculator, and a stock-option calculator.

www.pointofsale.com

Pointofsale.com specializes in retail essentials: point-of-sale software and hardware, bar-code scanners, magnetic-stripe readers, and receipt printers. FAQs answer questions about bar codes, POS systems, and cash drawers.

smartship.com

helps find your nearest package drop-off site

SmartShip makes it easy to select the right carrier for your shipments. Enter the weight and other details about your package, and the site will help you choose the best major carrier, whether your priority is speed or cost.

www.ssa.gov

smooth navigation

The **Social Security Administration's** site can make the necessary task of paying Social Security understandable to small-business owners. The Guide for Employers offers detailed help with employer wage-filing responsibilities. The FAQ answers questions about documentation and filing deadlines.

stamps.com

no special hardware required
must be online to print postage

Stamps.com lets customers buy postage online and print it using an inkjet or laser printer. You can send items first-class, Priority Mail, and Express Mail. Delivery confirmation and certified mail are also available.

usa.net

USA.net can set up a Web post office for your business, letting you and your employees have instant access to e-mail from any Web browser. The long list of standard and premium features includes necessities such as spell-checking and language translation.

webex.com

offers Web-based business collaboration
requires a special plug-in

WebEx is an online collaboration system that hosts thousands of daily meetings. Share documents and applications with colleagues who have your meeting-room password and the WebEx plug-in. Free "virtual offices" offer personalized conference rooms with online calendar, address-book, document-storage, and directory tools.

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

bestbuy.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Freshly restocked after a massive overhaul, **Best Buy's** site offers a fine selection of home audio and video components, portable audio gadgets, digital and traditional cameras, camcorders, and accessories.

consumer-direct.com

smooth navigation

Shopping for something simple, such as a surge protector? Or complicated, like a C-Band satellite receiver? Either way, **Consumer Direct Warehouse** provides a vast selection.

crutchfield.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

In business for 26 years, **Crutchfield** assembles an impressive catalog of audio and video products for your home and car. Inexpensive two-day shipping is standard for most orders. The Info Center offers glossaries, guides to choosing A/V components, and installation tips.

SITE REVIEWS

800.com

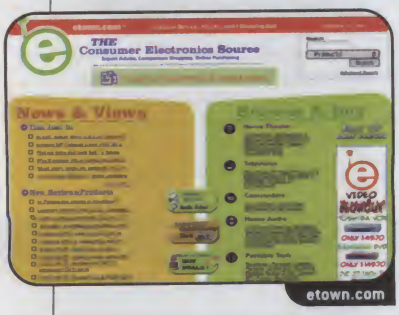
smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Home electronics is the name of the game at **800.com,** a site stocking an unbeatable selection of home audio and video components, digital cameras, personal audio devices, and telephones. Customer service includes the Expert Advice center, live online help, and community forums.

etown.com

smooth navigation
shipping costs and return policies can vary among etown.com partners

Consumer electronics is the focus at **etown.com,** a site offering gadgets such as cordless phones and flat-screen televisions. The site also serves up consumer-electronics news, informative features, and a knowledge bank that explains how to buy, use, and troubleshoot equipment. (ZDNet, *Computer Shopper's* parent company, is an investor in etown.com.)



gadgetuniverse.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

You'll discover gadgets galore at **Gadget Universe**—from useful ones (clocks, stereos, and phones) to fun gizmos. The selection includes items for your car, home, and office.

giantsavings.com

smooth navigation

GiantSavings.com offers a wide selection of home electronics, ranging from DVD players to PDAs.

globe-mart.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Global Mart's electronics area offers audio/video components, flat-panel displays, digital cameras, and multifunction printers. The selection also includes handheld PCs and uninterruptible power supplies.

hifi.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Hifi.com has home-audio and home-theater products to please budget shoppers and discriminating audiophiles. Unique features and policies, including price-matching, a trade-in program, and extended warranty refunds, set it apart.

igo.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The **iGo** site sells electronic necessities for folks on the go, including PDAs, cellular phones, and carrying cases. The extensive catalog of add-ons includes antennae, batteries, and other accessories for users of mobile digital devices.

mercata.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Mercata promises "group buying power" on electronics, computers, and products for the home. The site offers time-limited buying opportunities in which a product's price drops as more people decide to buy.

theweb-shop.com

easy ordering

Shop **The Web Shop Superstore** for a wide variety of home-electronics offerings, including computers, home-office equipment, cameras, camcorders, and home and car audio.

CAMERAS

abbeycamera.com

links to manufacturer sites • smooth navigation • good return policy

Abbey Camera's catalog of more than 10,000 cameras and accessories will impress even veteran photographers. The options range from 35mm cameras to medium- and large-format models, darkroom supplies, and professional gear.

keh.com

message board offers technical advice • smooth navigation • good return policy

In business for 20 years, **KEH Camera Brokers** peddles new items as well as good-condition used equipment. The automated buying service gives an immediate quote on what KEH will pay for your used equipment.

www.normancamera.com

good return policy

From point-and-shoot models to high-tech digital cameras, you're likely to find it in **Norman Camera's** catalog. See a large selection of film scanners, video cameras, and accessories.

photoalley.com

tips and how-to articles • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

From Agfa to Yashica, if it has a lens, it's at **Photo Alley.** This site features a catalog of more than 11,000 products, ranging from cameras and gadget bags to camcorders and even binoculars.

ritzcamera.com

free shipping on orders of more than $50 • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

In addition to offering cameras and accessories, **Ritz Camera** also sells photo albums and frames. Shoppers with a retail location nearby can see their photos online in one hour, then order reprints or merchandise with a photo on it.

servicemerchandise.com

smooth navigation • good return policy
many items only available for in-store pickup

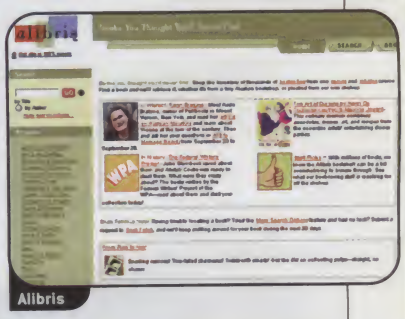
In business for nearly 40 years, **Service Merchandise** is a catalog showroom offering jewelry, home accessories, and travel items. The Cameras area of its Web site sells 35mm, digital, and Advanced Photo System (APS) cameras, as well as binoculars and telescopes.

BOOKS, MUSIC & MOVIES

www.alibris.com

Book Hound tool will search for a book for a month and e-mail you • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Alibris offers one-stop searching and browsing of hundreds of independent booksellers around the globe. You don't have to be a book collector to appreciate the massive selection in categories from romance to computers.

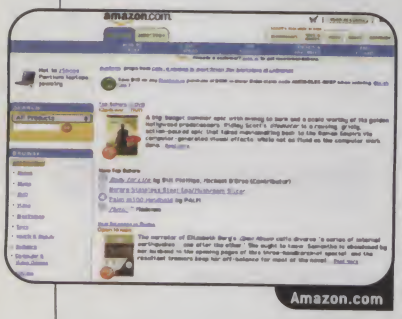


SITE REVIEWS

amazon.com

buy and sell rare and unusual items in person-to-person auctions • discussion boards and member Web pages • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Amazon.com's catalog of books, CDs, and videos is nothing short of gargantuan. Speedy searches and insightful recommendations make it easy to find what you're looking for, even if you don't know for sure what that is.



audible.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Audible delivers the next generation of books on tape. Buy and download audio programs, such as *The Wall Street Journal* or best-selling books. Then listen to the programs on your PC or a portable player.

bn.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

With millions of titles in its catalog, **Barnes & Noble's** site is a book lover's dream. If the book you want is out of print, don't despair: Barnes & Noble has associations with used-book sellers across the country. The site also offers e-books, music, DVDs, videos, posters, software, and magazines.

bookfinder.com

mailing list for booksellers

BookFinder is a search engine that scans the databases of 20,000 booksellers to find new, used, rare, and out-of-print books. It's a quick way to search many independent bookstores at once for hard-to-find titles.

borders.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy • best-sellers and forthcoming books sold for 40 percent off list price

If you enjoy getting lost in one of the enormous **Borders** stores, you'll appreciate this vast site. It offers 10 million books, CDs, and videos.

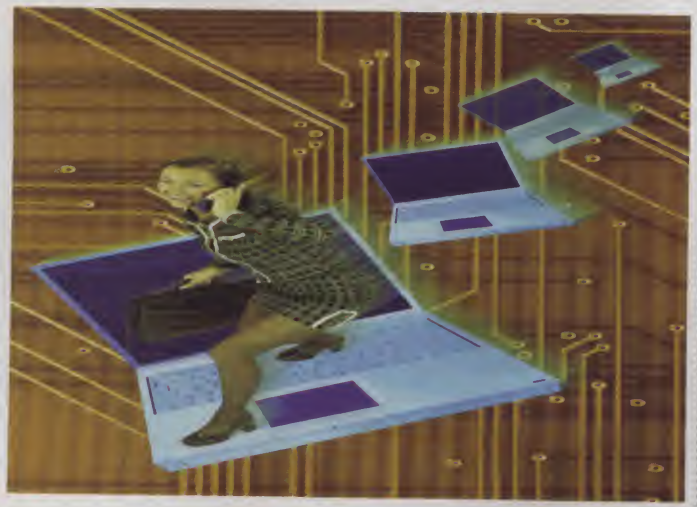
cdnow.com

create custom CDs • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

CDnow is a megasite offering an extensive catalog of titles on vinyl, cassette, and CD. RealAudio sound clips and reviews are available for many of the discs. The Album Advisor learns your musical tastes and suggests other bands you'll enjoy.

cdworld.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • read reviews of software and books, and write your own



CDworld.com sells software, video games, movies, and music—more than half a million items in all. You can get movies on videotape, DVD, laserdisc, or movie CD. Video-game choices include Dreamcast, Nintendo, and PlayStation, as well as PC and Mac titles.

checkout.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The CheckOut Entertainment Network offers music, movies, and video games, wrapped up in an entertaining shopping experience. The site serves up featured artists, quizzes, trivia, and lists of top sellers. You'll find plenty of detail about each item, complete with an editor's review, ratings, and technical details.

codysbooks.com

world's largest selection of Passover books and merchandise • 20 to 30 percent discounts on best-sellers

An independent bookstore based in Berkeley, Calif., **Cody's Books** offers a searchable catalog of its 150,000 in-stock titles. In addition, the store can order any in-print book, plus books published in some other countries. The site offers thoughtful recommendations and reading lists.

emusic.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

EMusic.com offers downloadable MP3 music in a wide variety of genres. You can purchase an individual song, usually for 99 cents, or download an entire album for about $9. Subscribe, and you can get unlimited MP3 downloads for as low as $9.99 per month.

www.express.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Express.com sells DVD movies, music, video games, and electronics. You'll find plenty of information about each title, and preordering hot releases is a breeze. The Auction area offers collectible goodies from the worlds of television, film, and sports, such as movie props and autographed scripts.

ibooks.com

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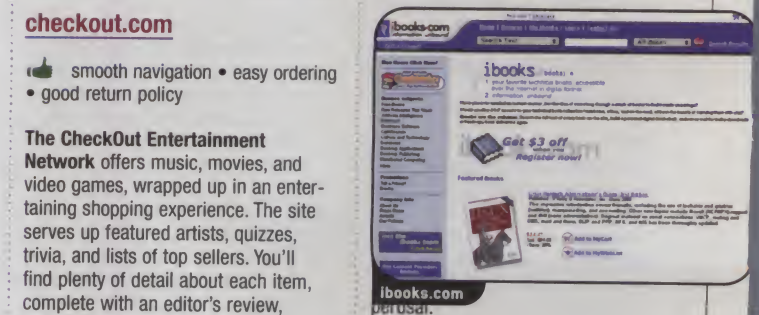
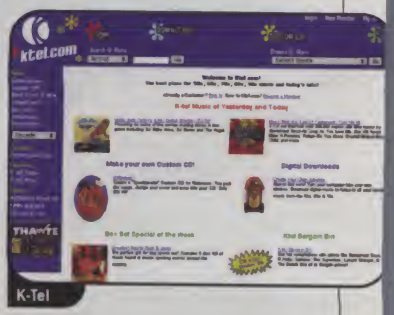
Ibooks.com offers more than 1,000 digital books on technical topics such as programming, databases, and multimedia. Books can be read online from any Web browser or printed for offline perusal.



ktel.com

online radio station • $6 CDs in the bargain bin • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Six departments at **K-Tel** offer a variety of merchandise with an emphasis on entertainment. At the custom CD store, shoppers can design their own compilation discs. The music store offers soundtracks and box sets of popular favorites.



muzicdepot.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

From electronica to jazz to gospel, **MuzicDepot.com** has just about any in-print CD or cassette, as well as information about out-of-print titles. Tell the Muzic Advizor about your tastes, and it will recommend other artists you *may* enjoy. The site also offers movies in the DVD and VHS formats.

powells.com

rare books • online reading *group* • smooth navigation • good return policy

Book lovers know **Powell's** as an independently owned megastore in Portland, Ore. You can search Powell's renowned selection of new and used books at its Web store. Browse through the staff picks and recommendation center for more great reads.

samgoody.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Sam Goody offers movies, music, and more—including software, video games, sheet music, and related books.

www.towerrecords.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The **Tower Records** site offers a huge selection of music and videos. The search tool lets you find music based on the artist, the album, or even the name of a single song. The Pulse online magazine includes reviews and interviews from pop and classical artists.

virginmega.com

daily music news and gossip • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Visit **Virgin's** legendary music and video store without taking a trip to Times Square. The megastore's site offers an incredible selection of tunes, DVDs, and videos, with thoughtful commentary on featured items and RealAudio previews of many tracks.

SITE REVIEWS

ONLINE TOY STORES

backtobasicstoys.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Now a part of Amazon.com's massive toy selection, **Back To Basics Toys** sets itself apart by specializing in classic playthings such as Lincoln Logs, Tinkertoys, Erector sets, and timeless board games.

etoys.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The flexibility, vast number of products, and thoughtful customer service at **eToys** make it a winner. The site helps shoppers find the perfect toy by browsing by category, brand, or a child's age. A new Hobbies area specializes in model kits, trains, and radio-control vehicles.

eurotoyshop.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

You can discover plenty of unusual gifts at **euroToyShop,** a U.S. company that specializes in European toys. The selection includes dolls, building toys, Brio trains, pull toys, and figurines.

fao.com

Barbie and other collectible dolls • children's furniture • smooth navigation • good return policy

FAO Schwarz's illustrious house of toys has a neat and orderly Web store. "Specialty Boutiques" include Madame Alexander dolls, FAO Girl, and a Bargain Bazaar.

hearthsong.com

frequent-buyers club • smooth navigation • good return policy

HearthSong's toy area offers a distinctive array of timeless art and craft supplies, games, and puzzles. You'll find fun and educational classics, without a single Disney or Pokémon character in the catalog.

imaginarium.com

easy ordering • good return policy
talking Web pages are distracting

Imaginarium offers quality toys from around the world, including arts and crafts, science and nature, and "pretend play" items. Each toy is rated by the skills it helps develop, such as mathematics and cooperative play.

kbkids.com

Best Site winner this month. See below.

smarterkids.com

low-price guarantee • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The folks at ***SmarterKids.com*** rate and test every toy before deciding whether it's fit for sale. Browse by character, theme, or the age of the child. The Family Resource Center features expert columns and activity ideas.

SmarterKids.com

toysrus.com

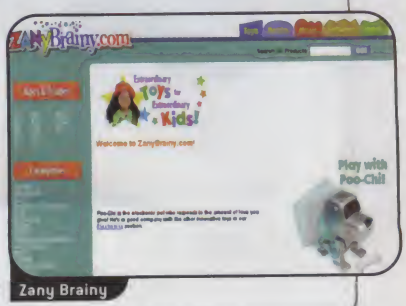
smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Offering a vast selection ranging from bicycles to video games, **Toys R Us** brings its mammoth retail store to the Web. The site's Babiesrus.com arm peddles infant toys, cribs, strollers, and other products for the Web's smallest shoppers.

zanybrainy.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Zany Brainy has a large selection of high-quality, nonviolent toys. Finding the perfect one is easy: You can browse by age, brand, character (such as Blue's Clues and Pokémon), or category (such as dolls and crafts). The selection includes toys, books, music, software, and videos. ▼



Zany Brainy

kbkids.com

Computer Shopper Best Site Award

Browsing the fantastic **KB Kids** site is nearly as fun as playing with the toys it sells. This online toy store offers an impressive variety of playthings, from classics like Spirographs and Legos to new favorites.

Navigating the site is swift, thanks to the ability to browse by category, brand, age, or price range. If you're looking for a gift idea, peruse the bestsellers page, which highlights the most popular products, or take a look at the newest products to grace these virtual shelves.

The video-games section carries the latest consoles, games, and accessories—if you can't decide, check out the selection of reviews. The software area focuses on kids' software for Windows and Macintosh: You can browse for titles appropriate for a particular age group or that feature your child's favorite characters.

The online customer-care center offers helpful tips and answers to FAQs, as well as the ability to check your order status. For offline assistance, the company offers a toll-free, 24-hour customer-service line. The site's flexible return policy allows for a full refund within 30 days—you can ship the product back or return it to any of the 1,300 retail KB Toys locations.

KB KIDS
Main focus: Toys and collectibles
Additional categories: *Video games and software*
Areas of development: New site design that includes themed shops such as Lego, video games, and an outlet store